

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

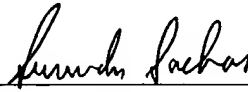
Claims 1, 2, 4-13, 20-27, 31, 33-48, 52-61, 65-76, and 81-88 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 2, 4-13, 20-23, 25, 26, 31, 47, 52, 54-61, 67, 69, 70-74, 75-77, 80, 81, and 83-88 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. patent 6,130,726 to Darbee et al. (herein "Darbee") in view of U.S. patent 5,996,028 to Niimi et al. (herein "Niimi"). Claims 24, 27, and 53 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Darbee in view of Niimi and further in view of U.S. patent 5,917,915 to Hirose.

Applicants note that the outstanding rejections of the pending claims are all based upon the primary reference, Darbee. The present application claims priority to the Japanese application JP 09-193588, filed on July 18, 1997. Applicants respectfully perfect priority by filing herewith a certified English translation of Japanese priority document JP 09-193588, which was filed prior to effective filing date of Darbee, which is a continuation in part of Application No. 08/999,716, filed October 6, 1997. Application No. 08/999,716 is a continuation of Application No. 08/823,507. The undersigned have not reviewed the contents of Application No. 08/999,716 or 08/823,507, as the rejection is based solely upon the CIP application patent Darbee, which has a filing date later than the Applicants' perfected priority date.

Consequently, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance, in view of the perfection of priority. An early and favorable action is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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